

other demonstration of a plan to achieve sufficient protection to realize the commercialization state and attain at least a temporary competitive advantage.

(v) *Financing*. Plans for securing necessary funding in Phase III.

(vi) *Assistance and mentoring*. Plans for securing needed technical or business assistance through mentoring, partnering, or through arrangements with state assistance programs, Small Business Development Centers, Federally-funded research laboratories, manufacturing extension Partnership Centers, or other assistance providers.

(8) *Data Collection*. Each Phase II applicant will be required to provide information to the Tech-Net Database System (<http://technet.sba.gov>) per OMB No. 3245-03356. The following are examples of the data to be entered by applicants into Tech-Net:

(i) Any business concern or subsidiary established for the commercial application of a product or service for which an SBIR award is made;

(ii) Revenue from the sale of new products or services resulting from the research conducted under each Phase II award;

(iii) Additional investment from any source, other than Phase I or Phase II awards, to further the research and development conducted under each Phase II award; and

(iv) Updates to information in the Tech-Net database for any prior Phase II award received by the small business concern.

(b) [Reserved]

### **Subpart D—Submission and Evaluation of Proposals**

#### **§ 3403.9 Submission of proposals.**

The SBIR program solicitation for Phase I proposals and the correspondence requesting Phase II proposals will provide the deadline date for submitting proposals, and instructions for submitting the proposal to CSREES for funding consideration.

#### **§ 3403.10 Proposal review.**

(a) The receipt of all proposals will be acknowledged.

(b) All Phase I and II proposals will be evaluated and judged on a competi-

tive basis. Proposals will be initially screened to determine responsiveness. Proposals passing this initial screening will be technically evaluated by scientists to determine the most promising technical and scientific approaches. Each proposal will be judged on its own merit. USDA is under no obligation to fund any proposal or any specific number of proposals in a given topic. It also may elect to fund several or none of the proposed approaches to the same topic or subtopic.

(c) Phase I and II proposal evaluation criteria will be published in the "Method of Selection and Evaluation Criteria" section of the program solicitation.

(d) External peer reviewers may be used during the technical evaluation stage of this process. Selections will be made from among recognized specialists who are uniquely qualified by training and experience in their respective fields to render expert advice on the merit of proposals received. It is anticipated that such experts will include those located in universities, government, and nonprofit research organizations. If possible, USDA intends that peer review groups shall be balanced with minority and female representation and with an equitable age distribution.

(e) Reviewers will base their conclusions and recommendations on information contained in the Phase I or Phase II proposal. It cannot be assumed that reviewers are acquainted with any experiments referred to within a proposal, with key individuals, or with the firm itself. Therefore, the proposals should be self-contained and written with the care and thoroughness accorded papers for publication.

(f) Final decisions will be made by USDA based upon the rating assigned by reviewers in consideration of the technical and commercial potential of the application, duplication of research, any critical USDA requirements, resubmission and budget limitation. In the event that two or more proposals are of approximately equal merit, the existence of a cooperative research and development agreement (CRADA) with a USDA laboratory will

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be an important consideration. The existence of a follow-on funding commitment for continued development in Phase III will also be an important consideration. The value of any commitment will depend upon the degree of financial commitment made by investors, with the maximum value resulting from a signed agreement with reasonable terms for an amount at least equal to funding requested from USDA in Phase II.

### § 3403.11 Availability of information.

Information regarding the peer review process will be made available to the extent permitted under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552), the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a), the SBIR Policy Directive, and implementing Departmental and other Federal regulations. Implementing Departmental regulations are found at 7 CFR part 1.

## Subpart E—Supplementary Information

### § 3403.12 Terms and conditions of grant awards.

Within the limit of funds available for such purposes, the Authorized Departmental Officer shall make research project grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose proposals are judged most meritorious in the announced program areas under the evaluation criteria and procedures set forth in the annual program solicitation. The beginning of the project period shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support. All funds granted under this part shall be expended solely for the purpose for which funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations of this part, the terms and conditions of award, the Federal Acquisition Regulations (48 CFR part 31), and the Department's Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations (7 CFR part 3015).

### § 3403.13 Notice of grant awards.

(a) The grant award document may include the following:

(1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution;

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(2) Title of project;

(3) Name and institution of Project Director's chosen to direct and control approved activities;

(4) Identifying grant number assigned by the Department;

(5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project;

(6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved for the project period;

(7) Legal authority(ies) under which the grant is awarded;

(8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;

(9) Applicable award terms and conditions;

(10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the grant award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by CSREES to carry out its respective granting activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular grant.

(b) [Reserved]

### § 3403.14 Use of funds; changes.

(a) *Delegation of fiscal responsibility.* Unless the terms and conditions of the grant state otherwise, the grantee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of grant funds.

(b) *Changes in Project Plans.* (1) The permissible changes by the grantee, Project Director, or other key project personnel in the approved project grant shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the grantee or the Project Director (PD) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The signatory of the award document is the ADO, not the program contact.

(2) Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the grantee and, in consultation with the CSREES SBIR National Program Leader, approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no